

Learning How To Live



The Slide For Life taught me everything I needed to know about myself.

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POSTED BY LHTOL IN [UNCATEGORIZED](#)

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The Slide For Life is the centerpiece of the Confidence Course; an obstacle course designed to do some of that “building back up” after the infamous “tearing down” phase of Marine Corps recruit training. (Other services have it too, apparently.)



The first time I climbed the Slide For Life, early in recruit training, it terrified me. (Granted, I went to boot camp before they invented safety nets – 1993.)

Here's how it went down. One of the meanest human beings I had ever met was vehemently expressing that I ought to lay down, face first, on a downward pitched rope, and then to pull myself hand over hand towards certain death, off this ridiculous man-made cliff.

Fuuuuuuuck that. Not a chance. Back down the ladder for me.

But the mean guy was relentless. He was cheering me on, and doing it with such enthusiasm that I'm pretty sure he spit on my lip. I could taste the Copenhagen chew. It wasn't the first time.

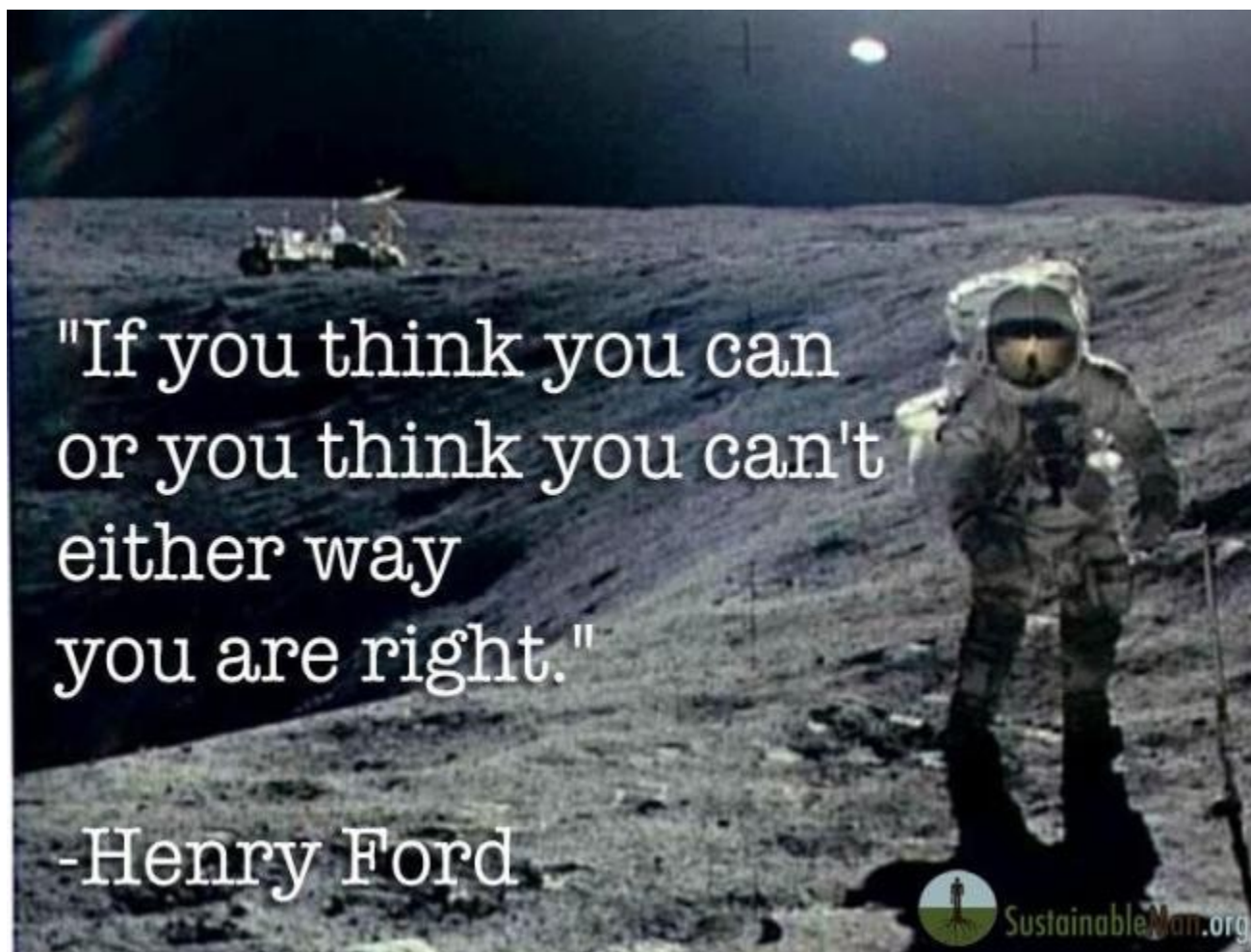
So I got on that rope because my fear of him was greater than my fear of the rope, and not because I had any faith in my ability to perform the slide. I started to pull myself out past the ledge. My head swam. I was at least 400 feet in the air. (Probably 30ft) I was two feeble pulls past the ledge and my Drill Instructor added one last bit of motivation by shouting "Don't let go, there's alligators in the water!"



I realize now how ridiculous that sounds. I probably realized it then, but I was face down on a rope that some asshole was shaking back and forth, 20-something feet in the air, scanning the murky green water for leviathans, and it scared the heck out of me.

I didn't fall in, though. I wish I had fallen in. No, I made it a third of the way, and then let go. Alligators or no alligators, I quit. (There were no alligators.)

I didn't believe in myself. I knew I was incapable of doing this ridiculous upside down rope technique, and so I was. I quit. I couldn't sleep that night. I wondered if I was a coward. I wondered if they would figure out that I was an impostor not worthy of being a Marine.



When we returned to the Confidence Course over a month later, I was determined to conquer the Slide. I had a lot to prove, but it was all to myself. I knew deep down that I had it in me to conquer fear, but so many times in my life I had chosen instead to run from danger. To quit. To give up. But not this time.

I had had enough of fear.

I wish I had a better story, but the reality is that performing the Slide For Life was incredibly easy the second time I attempted it. I enjoyed it immensely; this bane of my existence, and I REALLY wanted to do it again. (The DI said no and yelled at me some more.) All because of mindset. I knew I was going to be able to do it, and so I did it.

I see people attempt to overcome their fears every day in a CrossFit gym, We don't have a Slide For Life at Boost (yet!), but a first handstand or a PR Snatch can be just as frightening. And nothing in CrossFit is more fulfilling than watching people overcome their fears.

I'm thankful every day that I get to be that asshole Drill Instructor for my community.

*I'm still scared of spiders and bacon shortages.

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O THOUGHTS ON "THE SLIDE FOR LIFE TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING I NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT MYSELF."

1.  Walle, A. said:

March 21, 2024 at 9:56 pm

Not to slam anyone's blog (which, of course, I didn't exactly read) but I found The Slide For Life the easiest thing on P.I.-it looks much worse than it actually is-I found it a breeze, really, in comparison to everything I'd heard about it-like that ugly girl in Homeroom, once you go through with it, it looks worse than it actually is (as noted, they didn't have safety nets at the time or so I recall-you fell in that nasty water-I'll always believe Covid started there, the combination of germs in that green, black shit might also be the cure for cancer or what they should have put in Fidel Castro's cigars-falling, of course, was often the fate of our biggest people when it came to The Slide For Life-the bigger you were, the worse you often had it-our biggest people didn't get far and I couldn't believe it: Despite Hollywood's buff imagery per jarheads, being smaller was advantageous in the FMF, too-you'd have a much easier time of it

the less you had to carry around-if someone couldn't hack something, it was probably a weight-lifting clown). The hard part of The Slide For Life was the wear and tear on your nuts because of that rope-the hardest part for me in boot camp altogether was getting dressed "not last" at reveille-I was so bad at it, and therefore, so last, so often Sgt. Murphy would immediately say "Oh, Walle, don't even try!" which was code for "You know what to do-my quarterdeck now!" One might say I lived on the quarterdeck due to how much time I put into it-they should have moved my rack there-it was a daily hobby and definitely my first task of each day-I think even the quarterdeck got tired of me; so the quarterdeck wouldn't get tired of Pvt. Walle's same old song-and-dance, push-ups, sit-ups, push-ups, side-straddle hops, mountain-climbers, push-ups were frequently changed not at my command-whatever obstacle I was doing when Murphy said "If you do one thing right on this island Walle, let it be this!" it wasn't The Slide For Life aw

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